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ABSTRACT

In order for teacher centers to develop programs and activities appropriate to the needs of their target populations, a detailed and accurate representation, as well as ongoing evaluation of the center operation must be maintained. A data base must be established that encompasses the accurate portrayal of daily operations in order to facilitate determination of future directions for center programs, based on projected needs. This paper examines the operation of a well-established teacher center in Knoxville, Tennessee, focusing on center data concerning the amount and purpose of usage as well as the characteristics of the participant population. The data forms the basis for a detailed portrayal of past and present center operation relative to assessed needs. Consideration is given to the development of a data base that will enable teacher center personnel to more effectively analyze usage patterns. The data also provides a foundation for more accurately focusing and designing center activities for subgroups of the population that are not presently being served. A discussion is presented on the potential represented by the teacher center for productive avenues of research concerning the needs of preservice education majors in addition to the staff development needs of inservice teachers. (JD)

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TEACHER CENTER CLIENT PROFILE PATTERNS of USE and RECOMMENDATIONS for DATA COLLECTION and RESEARCH

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Introduction

Staff development or inservice training for teachers has long been an important concern of those committed to educational improvement. Recent trends and events, including the various national commission reports and subsequent education reform proposals, have renewed and extended the level of attention paid to upgrading teacher effectiveness and professionalism. As economic and employment patterns have reinforced the stability of the teacher work force in most geographic areas and within most specializations, concern for strengthening the skills of inservice teachers has correspondingly heightened.

As awareness has grown of the need for staff development opportunities that can help teachers become more knowledgeable and proficient in instruction, curriculum, and other essential areas, so too, has the number of program structures described in the education literature or instituted by particular school districts (Joyce, Showers, 1983). It appears, however, that many approaches to teacher inservice or staff development have failed to yield desired or lasting outcomes (Wade, 1985). The anticipated degree of implementation and continued use of ideas or processes presented in workshops or other training sessions has, it seems, often failed to materialize. (Staff Development/Organization Development).

In response to this situation, many educational leaders continue to seek effective, innovative mechanisms to deliver appropriate inservice training. Among the relatively widespread strategies that continues to be regarded as a promising approach to staff development is the "teacher center."

The concept of the teacher center developed in the 1970's as an innovative approach to inservice education and staff development. Through the efforts of teachers, administrators, and individuals from higher education, a network of

teacher centers has been established throughout the United States. These centers serve as an alternative to the more traditional mechanisms of inservice training and staff development. In general these facilities function to provide a client-focused approach to the training and renewal of individuals that comprise the educational organization. The activities and programs offered by teacher centers are intended to represent a direct response to the needs articulated by the individuals and organizations that utilize the facility. These activities include workshops and individual instructional support as well as state and university training relative to mandated changes in certification requirements or instructional methodologies. Programs offered by teacher centers have the potential to reach a broad spectrum of educational personnel and address a wide variety of important issues. Due to the substantial scope of this potential impact it is important that center organizers be able to accurately assess and respond to changes in participant needs in an effective and timely manner.

In order for teacher centers to develop programs and activities that are appropriate to meet the needs of their target populations, a detailed and accurate representation as well as ongoing evaluation of center operation must be maintained. This task requires the establishment of a data base that encompasses the accurate portrayal of daily operations. The data base should also facilitate the determination of future directions for center programs based upon projected needs.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the operation of a well established teacher center in light of the concerns articulated above. This examination focuses on center data concerning the amount and purpose of usage as well as the characteristics of the participant population. These data will form the basis for a detailed portrayal of past and present center operation relative to assessed needs. Further, consideration will be given to the development of a

data base that will enable teacher center personnel to more efficiently and effectively analyze usage patterns. These data will provide a foundation to more accurately focus and design center activities to interface with subgroups of the population that are not presently being served. Thus, an improved data base will provide information to better inform future program area decisions. Discussion will also address the potential represented by the teacher center for productive avenues of research concerning the needs of pre-service education majors in addition to the staff development needs of inservice teachers.

Research Objectives

As indicated by the previous discussion the formulation of objectives to guide the present investigation are based upon the collection, analysis, and evaluation of specific types of teacher center participant data. These research objectives include:

A. To portray the daily function of the Knoxville City/Knox County Teacher Center for the thirty-two previous months of operation (1982-85) relative to the assessed needs of the user population.

B. To develop recommendations for the establishment of a functional data base through the collection of specific types of information that will allow for the more accurate focus and design of center programs. Attention will be given to possibilities for interfacing with populations that are not presently being reached.

C. To recommend prospective directions for research efforts relative to the application of teacher centers in improving pre-service and inservice teacher education.

Findings

The current services and program offerings by the Knoxville City/Knox County Teacher Center (KCKCTC) are the result of a series of needs assessments completed between 1977 and 1979. These survey-based needs assessments involved

teachers, administrators, students, and teacher education faculty members. Each of these sample groups was asked to indicate the most pressing needs relative to their specific relationship with the educational process. Major findings indicated that all four groups expressed a need to learn more in areas related to:

- Motivating and reinforcing students
- Developing students' self-concepts, values, and attitudes
- Improving communication
- Identifying behavior problems and possible solutions.

In general, individuals expressed a need to have inservice and staff development programs which stress the use of information concerning appropriate instructional and classroom practices. The majority of respondents indicated that longer term programs designed to address these issues would be preferable to short-term, disjointed workshops (Teacher Center Application for Validation, 1982).

As a result of the various needs assessments as well as input from other education professionals, the KCKCTC developed a battery of activities and programs designed to serve its member schools and agencies. Daily activities and services include access to professional reading, development of instructional materials, and consultations concerning specific needs and problems. The Center also provides a variety of workshops and special meetings based upon the expressed needs of the clientele. Recent examples include workshops devoted to computers, environmental education, child abuse, stress, and retirement. In addition, several classes from the University of Tennessee use the Center facilities on a regular basis.

Data pertaining to the three previous fiscal years of operation are represented in Tables 1-A, B, and C. It is clear that attendance throughout the operational time period has been generally consistent. The months of August,

MONTH	REASONS FOR ATTENDING ACTIVITIES													ATTENDANCE						TOTAL
	Need-Spec. Grad/ Personal Courses	Professional Reading/Computer**	Workshop/Training Session	Materials Development	Materials Check-out or Return	Recycle or Provide Material	Duplicating Educa. Materials or Lam.	Meetings or Special Events	Consultation with Staff	General Information	Volunteer, Parent, or Other	Rest and Relaxation	No Reason Stated	Total Attendance 1984-1985 Operational Yr. 6	Total Attendance 1983-1984 Operational Yr. 5	Total Attendance 1982-1983 Operational Yr. 4	Total Attendance 1981-1982 Operational Yr. 3	Total Attendance 1980-1981 Operational Yr. 2	Total Attendance 1979-1980 Operational Yr. 1	
July 1984																	519			519
August 1984	198	1	130	389	22	-	17	177	8	13	8	-	64	1,004	748	1,076	593	307		3,748
September 1984	-	1	363	249	9	1	14	124	6	16	96	-	38	917	439	847	564	287	99	2,953
October 1984	-	6	338	382	17	2	20	147	19	18	-	-	65	1,012	1,004	1,273	914	1,263	369	5,835
November 1984	-	7	251	367	13	-	17	69	10	18	4	1	47	802	1,147	1,015	1,093	896	818	5,571
December 1984	-	-	103	101	5	-	5	33	2	1	2	-	28	280	298	387	386	299	175	1,835
January 1985	23	2	529	141	10	-	10	63	8	16	7	-	33	842	804	867	522	856	537	4,428
February 1985	34	7	478	246	13	1	9	103	7	2	6	-	38	945	804	1,140	920	1,260	453	5,522
March 1985	31	10	679	239	13	1	10	128	12	115	14	-	44	1,296	980	857	1,616	991	535	6,275
April 1985	28	21	560	203	8	-	8	180	3	16	14	-	24	1,065	484	1,146	920	669	744	5,028
May 1985	51	3	194	219	18	-	7	81	10	4	9	2	20	618	1,130	1,169	758	699	1,002	
June 1985	475	-	12	109	21	1	5	8	13	5	4	-	10	853	1,238	787	723	461	1,022	
TOTALS	838	58	3638	2624	149	6	122	1114	98	220	184	3	410	9,444	9,074	10,364	9,538	7,988	5,554	
PERCENTAGES	9.9	.614	38.52	27.8	1.6	.064	1.3	11.8	1.04	2.33	1.74	.032	4.34							

**Computer Added 1984-85

Table 1 - A

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MONTH	REASONS FOR ATTENDING ACTIVITIES													ATTENDANCE				TOTAL
	Need-Spec Grad/ Renewal Courses*	Professional Reading*	Workshop/Train-ing Session*	Materials Development*	Materials Check-out or Return	Recycle or Freebie Material	Duplicating Ed Materials or Lam	Meetings or Special Events	Consultation w/Staff	General Information	Volunteer, Parent, Others	Rest and Relaxation	No Reason Stated	Total Attendance 1982-1983 Operational Yr 4	Total Attendance 1981-1982 Operational Yr 3	Total Attendance 1980-1981 Operational Yr 2	Total Attendance 1979-1980 Operational Yr 1	
July 1982															519			519
August 1982	150	9	144	278	11	2	13	368	6	9	40	1	45	1,076	593	307		1,976
September 1982	0	3	148	174	7	1	43	99	13	12	52	2	93	647	564	287	99	1,597
October 1982	0	2	670	200	8	1	34	160	10	6	19	1	162	1,273	914	1,263	369	3,819
November 1982	0	2	458	216	5	0	27	12	6	2	10	0	277	1,015	1,093	896	618	3,622
December 1982	0	3	178	69	5	0	14	15	5	3	10	0	85	387	396	299	175	1,257
January 1983	121	4	264	236	9	2	12	141	5	18	11	2	42	867	522	856	537	2,782
February 1983	176	2	468	319	10	0	21	76	13	20	20	1	14	1,140	920	1,260	453	3,773
March 1983	33	4	276	289	17	2	5	200	9	7	15	0	0	857	1,616	991	535	3,999
April 1983	216	15	417	373	15	0	24	50	13	19	3	1	0	1,146	920	669	744	3,479
May 1983	285	0	321	294	44	2	24	157	14	16	8	4	0	1,169	758	699	1,002	3,628
June 1983	473	2	51	81	24	0	2	3	20	6	1	0	1	** 664	723	461	1,022	2,870
TOTALS	1454	46	3395	2529	155	10	219	1281	114	118	189	12	719	10,241	9538	7,988	5,554	33,321
PERCENTAGES	14	.4	33	24	2	0	2	12	1	1		.1	7					

Table 1 - B

MONTH	REASONS FOR ATTENDING ACTIVITIES													ATTENDANCE			TOTAL ATTENDANCE
	UT Off-Campus Class--Grad. Cr.*	Professional Reading*	Workshop/Training Session*	Materials Development*	Materials Check-out or Return	Recycle or Freebie Mater.	Duplicating Ed. Materials	Meetings or Special Events	Consultation w/Staff	General Information	Volunteer, Parents, Others	Rest and Relaxation	No Reason Stated	Total Attendance 1981-1982 Operational Yr 3	Total Attendance 1980-1981 Operational Yr 2	Total Attendance 1979-1980 Operational Yr 1	
July 1981	356	0	0	41	7	0	17	0	1	10	75	0	84	591			591
August 1981	0	1	126	139	6	0	36	142	2	7	34	0	100	593	307		900
September 1981	31	1	129	99	8	19	32	90	9	23	43	6	74	564	287	99	950
October 1981	125	4	195	213	13	1	28	198	10	8	43	4	72	914	1263	369	2,546
November 1981	91	4	483	236	9	3	23	80	4	23	37	4	96	1093	896	618	2,607
December 1981	45	2	181	102	10	0	5	15	5	5	20	0	6	396	299	175	870
January 1982	45	0	135	106	8	8	19	110	6	8	7	1	69	522	856	537	1,915
February 1982	73	4	313	355	16	7	31	49	2	28	24	1	17	920	1260	453	2,633
March 1982	32	5	954	221	19	7	24	76	7	24	26	0	221	1616	991	535	3,142
April 1982	85	3	267	200	8	1	11	211	9	12	23	1	89	920	669	744	2,333
May 1982	68	2	114	207	24	1	22	132	1	11	29	3	144	758	699	1002	2,459
June 1982	342	1	125	108	20	1	7	31	5	5	32	2	44	723	461	1022	2,206
TOTALS	1293	27	3022	2027	148	48	255	1134	61	164	393	22	1016	9610	7988	5554	23,152
PERCENTAGES	13	.3	31	21	2	.5	3	12	.6	2	4	.2	11	1.00			

Table 1 - C

October, November, February, March, and April have consistently yielded the highest attendance. The KCKCTC has maintained a rather high average number of visits per year. The Center received an average of 8660 visits per year for the operational time period between 1979 and 1985.

Although a broad spectrum of activities and services are offered by the Center, information collected concerning reasons for attendance indicate a fairly narrow range of usage by patrons. The Center offers activities grouped within thirteen specific categories. The majority of use, however, occurs within only four of these categories with two of the four encompassing a substantial portion of the attendance. (Refer to Table 2). Those categories receiving the highest frequency of use include need-specific graduate and renewal courses, workshop/training sessions, materials development, and meetings on special events.

Participants who utilize the KCKCTC represent five basic affiliations: Knoxville City Schools, Knox County Schools, specific membership schools, University of Tennessee students, as well as a group composed of diverse individuals. Table 3 represents the number of visits, excluding workshops and special meetings, relative to each of the basic user groups. As can be determined from the sample data represented within the table, Knoxville City and Knox County account for the bulk of Center visits, with University of Tennessee students comprising the third largest participant group.

Within the public and membership school user groups, elementary teachers accounted for a sizable majority of Center visits during the 32 month sampling period (5503). Both middle and high school teachers represented a very low frequency of utilization, 910 and 963 visits respectively, for the 32 month reporting period. Data indicated that participants comprising the "other" category made use of the Center at a high rate during the last 32 months (3937 visits). This category represented administrators, supervisors, parents,

Frequencies and Percentages Regarding
Categories of Activities
Table 2

Activity Category	Total Visits 1981 -- 1985	Percentage of Total
Need-spec Grad./ Renewal Courses - - -	3,585	12.3
Professional Reading - - -	131	.45
Workshop/Training Session - - -	10,055	34.4
Materials Development - - -	7,180	24.5
Materials Check-out or Return - - -	452	1.5
Recycle or Free Material - - -	64	.22
Duplicating Educ. Materials - - -	596	2.0
Meetings or Special Events - - -	3,529	12.1
Consultation w/Staff - - -	273	.9
General Information - - -	502	1.7
Volunteer, Parent, Others - - -	746	2.6
No Reason Stated - - -	2,145	7.3
TOTAL:	29,258	

Group Participitant Visitation Frequency
Table 3

Organization or Group	Number of Visits	% of Total
Knoxville City Schools - - -	8,064	27.6
Knox County Schools - - -	9,534	32.6
Membership Schools - - -	1,706	5.8
University of Tennessee Students - - -	2,749	9.4
Other - - -	7,205	24.6
TOTAL:	29,258	

Participation Frequencies Relative
to Level of Teaching Position
Table 4

Level of Teaching Position	Participation Frequency	Percentage of Total
Elementary School	5,503	76.6
Middle School	910	12.3
High School	963	13.1
TOTAL:	17,376	

paraprofessionals, and higher education personnel as well as individuals from the business and industrial communities.

Conclusions

The first research objective focused on the portrayal of a particular teacher center's daily functioning, as an exemplar of the type of programs offered and the status of data collection regarding utilization patterns. Based upon findings for a thirty-two month operational period spanning the years 1982-85, it can be concluded that diverse workshops or training sessions and materials production together accounting for over half (58.9%) of the visitations recorded, were the principle day-to-day "business" of the center in terms of personal visits. Needs assessment data from several years earlier had, in fact, highlighted a number of instructional themes suitable for workshops, with the emerging emphasis on longer term workshops rather than one-time offerings. Data were not available to develop a portrayal of the proportion of center workshops that had in fact fulfilled the expressed need for extended coverage of important topics.

Data that had been collected indicated a preponderance of usage, as might be expected, by employees of the Knoxville City and Knox County school systems. However, to an appreciable degree, the teacher center seems to be serving members of other organizations or groups. Among those representing the teacher work force, elementary participants greatly out numbered those at middle school or high school levels.

Although records available enabled the determination that KCKCTC has generally been a frequently visited facility with a variety of functions (of which several strongly surfaced as common visitation purposes), there were a number of important factors that could not be portrayed through the existing information. Data collection systems did not, for example, enable cross referencing of specific purposes for attendance with types of participants, so

that needs could more accurately be detected and services assessed. The nature of workshops and attendance patterns for these (e.g., by level of school) were also insufficiently documented, with no indication of repeat visits by individuals within the existing data base.

As specified in the second research objective, recommendations concerning improved data base for teacher center operation were developed. These recommendations are intended to enable more accurate planning to strengthen the focus and design of teacher center programs. They include:

1. Develop consistent forms for collecting institution information (e.g., check-in sheets, tally sheets).
2. Maintain longitudinal records to determine multi-year utilization patterns, with annual summaries built in to an on going program of needs assessment and replanning. These records should also reflect the actual number of participants in addition to the total number of visits.
3. As each new person uses the center facility, assign that individual a number to use in recording all subsequent visits. A conveniently posted list can help visitors record their assigned numbers, enabling a computerized data system that can readily tabulate multiple visits or isolate other participant characteristics for cross-tabulation with program features.
4. Develop a clear, consistent set of descriptors to represent most common types of center uses that can be determined. Each of these descriptors, which should be as unambiguous and mutually exclusive as possible, and should be assigned a reference number to be used by attendees in filling out the check-in sheets.
5. Conduct personal interviews with appropriate representatives of the various organizations served by the particular teacher center to

determine types of information that would be beneficial to them regarding usage patterns. When appropriate data are available, each group or agency can better cooperate in assessing and taking steps to meet identified client needs.

The final research objective concerned future research directions that seem warranted relative to the rate of teacher centers in preservice and inservice education. Results obtained in this study suggest a need to conduct in depth longitudinal portrayals of utilization patterns and program offerings in a variety of teacher centers serving different types of educational organizations. Correlational analyses that indicate the relationships between participant characteristics and the frequency and nature of center visits are also needed. If the presently reported pattern of low utilization by secondary teachers (middle and high school levels) is confirmed, for example, knowledge of the type of programs they select and the nature of their visitation cycles (e.g., regular, one-time) would be valuable in generating strategies for increasing the impact on this potentially substantial client group.

In general, teacher centers represent a promising avenue through which to develop innovative and effective preservice and inservice training programs. However, in order for these centers to make a positive impact on the staff development and inservice needs of educational organizations, they must operate from an accurate, periodically updated, needs assessment. It is also vital to the effectiveness of teacher centers to develop and maintain a sufficiently detailed data base in order to portray both the level and type of participation in available programs and activities. Without such a base of data, it is difficult to determine the success of programs or the appropriateness of needs assessment.

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